

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 94304

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

Area Code 415
321-1200

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Librarian
Manuscript Division
Tennessee State Library and Archives
Nashville *37219*

Dear Sir:

I have an informative communication from Dr. Al Coburn in connection with the enclosed historical note, upon which I plan to enlarge. It includes a note from Mrs. Roy C. Avery stating that her late husband's papers, and "all of Fess's papers" have been deposited with you "In this way they will be kept safely and can be referred to by any interested parties".

I was most pleased to hear this, as I have been having a rather frustrating time recreating a historical record for an important turning point in biology, 1943-1946, in which "Fess" (Professor O.T. Avery) was a central figure. This correspondence may be particularly important, because of Avery's renowned reticence about publishing anything more than the bare bones data of his experiments in print.

May I ask you for information about the character of the collection of O.T. Avery's papers to which Mrs Roy Avery has referred? Might I then reasonably respond with a request to have some portion of it microfilmed (at my expense) for more careful perusal? His letters may contain many interesting details for the evolution of modern biology that would be unrevealing except to a specialist in the field.

The period 1943-1946 would be of the most central concern, and within that time any correspondence he may have had with the late Harriett Taylor (later Ephrussi) who was one of the first younger biologists to recognize the significance of his work. During an earlier period, back to 1928 or shortly before, any communications with Fred Griffith of London (who died in the blitz in 1944) would also be most revealing.

I doubt that there can be any material here that would be embarrassing to any living persons, and much that may be of vital historical interest; but I would be glad to see it under any cautions concerning publication that you, as custodians, may feel to be appropriate.

Yours sincerely,